

## Presentation for the second trimester assessment

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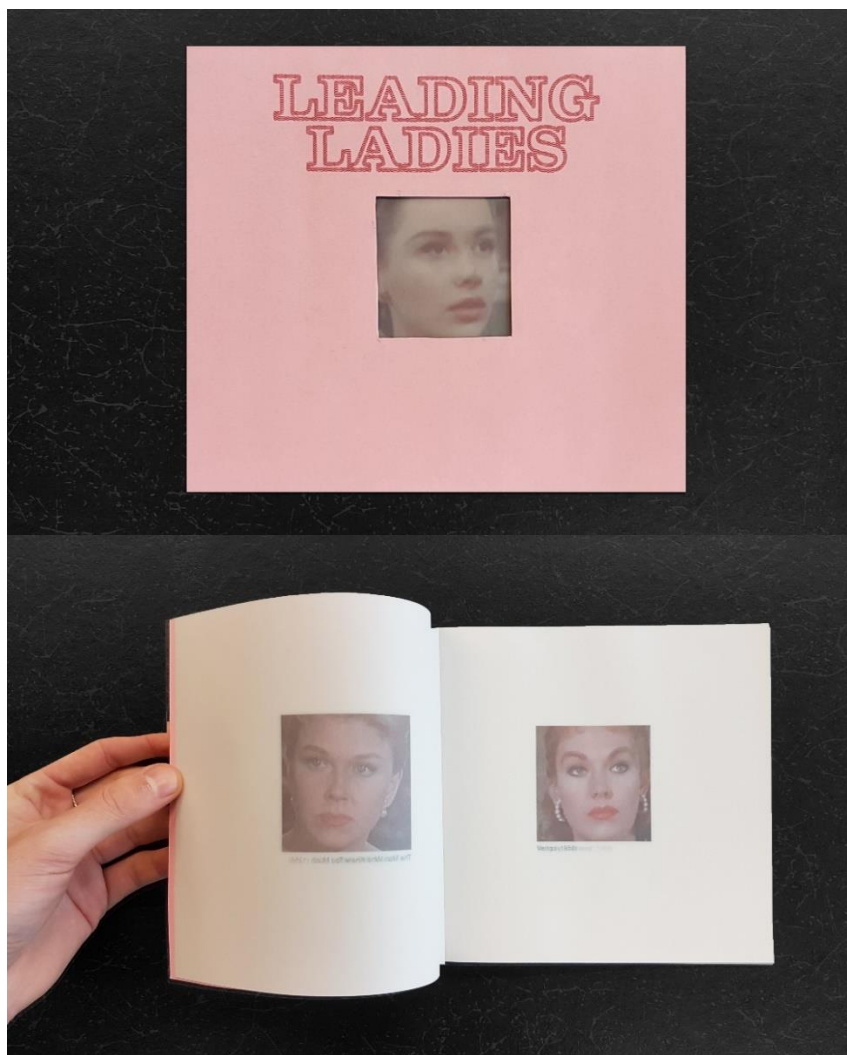
Piet Zwart Institute: Lens-Based Media

Year 1

Draft

### Photobook

For the photobook workshop, I made a booklet called 'Leading Ladies'. I made this photobook in order to reflect on the leading ladies starring in Alfred Hitchcock's films. I took at random screenshots of every leading female character in Hitchcock's fifteen colour films and printed them on transparent paper. Despite being praised as one of the best and most influential directors of all time, Hitchcock was known for a very particular taste in casting when it came to his leading actresses. As you can see in the book, almost all of Hitchcock's leading ladies are white, have blue eyes, red lips and a similar nose and jawline. Because the pictures are printed on transparent paper, their facial features slightly overlap when browsing the book. With this book I wanted to expose the remarkable similarities between these women. Hitchcock used his films to construct his perfect woman: the young, independent blonde he always desired. Because of the enormous impact of his films, the impact of his one-dimensional female character influenced many films and still lingers in contemporary culture. As an artist, I feel it is important to acknowledge this by pointing it out. It is important to examine and deconstruct the nature of the origin of beauty standards and gender roles that still have an effect on society.



### **EYE Research Labs**

The short I made for the EYE research labs 2020 reflects on my youth, where I used horror and thriller films as a distraction from my troubled home situation. The aesthetics of the film are a reference to Stephen King novels and films from the 80s, which I loved as a kid. The bold, sharp font and the grainy imagery evokes nostalgic feelings of times in which media was distributed in more primitive, cheaper formats. It's message carried out without subtlety. I used found footage from a forest fire in the Lincoln National Park from 1953 and combined this imagery with the . I asked horror podcast maker Soren Narnia to narrate the short poem I'd written because his voice reminds me of a movie villain or narrator. The poem is a static description of me, consuming films as a way to escape from my sad reality. The music is a free to use synth horror soundtrack written by Chen Walrus, which I found on Youtube. The music, narration and Stephen King inspired font together create a strong association with horror films. The goal was to create a film that calls for feelings of discomfort and unease, because those feelings were prominent in my teenage life when I indulged in horror films. The video of the fire adds depth and societal relevance to the film because it is real footage of an actual disaster.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GaQeI56gW8>

### **16mm project**

I made a silly short composition of random shots with Kamali and Jacob. We didn't really think things through, but it was a fun and interesting experience nonetheless. Very exciting to work with 16mm film and to develop it in an actual dark room, because I didn't really know how that worked. However, I found the old method quite labour intensive and unpredictable. I might consider using 16mm in the future, but for now, I'd like to have the control and safety that digital cameras provide me.



*A still from the 16mm film*

For my self-directed research, I researched the concept of the 'final girl'. A female archetype in horror films. With this series I reflect on the concept of the 'Final Girl', which was prominent in horror slasher films between the seventies and nineties. The term was coined by Carol J. Clover in her book *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (1992). Slasher films like *Halloween* and *Friday The 13<sup>th</sup>* were incredibly popular in the 70s and 80s and sparked many sequels. Wes Craven's *Scream* parodied the classic tropes of these films in the late 90s. Although it was a parody, the *Scream* series itself sparked a renewed interest in the slasher film genre. The 'Final Girl' refers to the last girl or woman alive to confront the killer in the slasher movie. The Final Girl is a highly sexualised female protagonist with very specific characteristics and appearance.



Jamie Lee Curtis in *Halloween* (1978)



Amy Steel in *Friday The 13<sup>th</sup> Part II* (1981)



Neve Campbell in *Scream* (1996)

With the series, I question the morals and problematic nature of the final girl. The final girl as a concept influenced my perception of young girls since I watched many slasher films. Through putting myself in the role of (re)creator of these images and working with models I know personally, I explore these stereotypes by creating them in an amateur studio setting. By putting myself in the role of director of photography, I can literally build up the character using attributes, make up, lightning and my camera. In that way, the aesthetics and characteristics of the image become clear to me; readable, you could say. The construction of the image helps me to understand my own prejudices and the attraction I felt towards (young) women. The final girl stereotype has, in a way, shaped my male gaze. It has partly determined what I perceive as attractive in females. I edited the

photos in such a way that they fit the VHS aesthetics, because I saw most of these images for the first time on video. Today, the final girl is still a trope in many films, despite the fact that there are more and more films being made in which the Final Girl is more layered and diverse.

I eventually turned this series into a zine because I felt like the imagery would work well on cheap, low quality paper. Mainly because of its less than subtle nature. The fact that the thin, glossy newspaper on which the photos are printed The zine refers to promotional posters of celebrities and films that one can find in teen magazines. It also taps into the idea that the final girl as a hero... an example.



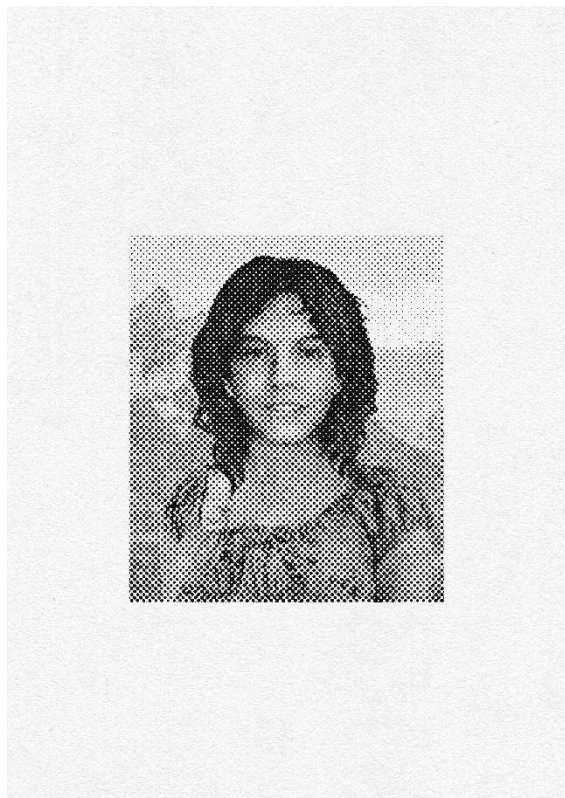
When I finished this project, I did a lot of research into the nature of true crime imagery. As a fan of horror and true crime, I found it very exciting to dive into the world of forensics, criminal profiling and blood spatter analysis. What I found most exciting how true crime shows/books and series are often rooted in reality but uses the cinematic language of fictional work to carry and spread its message. True Crime and horror are in a complex and interwoven relationship when it comes . For example; horror films are often sold as 'based on a true story' to boost sales. Furthermore, horror films like The Blair Witch Project (1999) even had a effective marketing campaign in which it was claimed that the footage used in the film was real. True crime documentaries and books on the other hand, use narrative structures and physical elements like grainy film and dark cinematography borrowed from horror films. My interest lies with the What I find most compelling about true crime, is that, no matter how horrific the committed crimes are, almost all people are interested in it (to at least some extent). Netflix is full of serial killer documentaries, and there might be more true crime books written than love stories. In the past decade and currently, there are many academics that research the subject of true crime versus fictionalised crime. Jake Arnott wrote about the correlation between the popularisation of crime fiction and the increase of crime in the 'real' world. Joy Wiltenburg finds that 'heavy watchers' of television often overestimate the incidence of crime in their own neighbourhood. Rachel Franks states that true crime has captured, and held, the public imagination, maintaining a place in our societies (as demonstrated through the consumption of true crime) through successfully navigating shifts across format and focus. I investigated the phenomenon of true crime and the way it's manifests itself in physical ways by watching Netflix documentaries like The Ted Bundy Tapes, The Confession Killer and Evil Genius. Furthermore, I listened to true crime podcasts like Casefile and Death In Ice Valley. I'm particularly interested in the nature of true crime imagery: the way people associate certain printing styles, types of imagery and even fonts with true crime. It is typewriter fonts, grainy pictures and that makes them readable as something that conveys true crime elements.

Furthermore, I want to explore several types of imagery and texts to have a better understanding of what makes an image readable as a forensic image. What combination of Also, true crime imagery is often perceived as 'real' imagery, despite the fact that often these images are heavily edited or even altered when put into a entertainment context. I want to learn what it is exactly, that



attracts me in this specific language. I want to explore how I can use it in my future work. I made this book, centred on the reconstruction photo of victims. I used free domain reconstruction photos made of unidentified decedents found in the United States. The photos are very uncanny, so I applied a riso print filter to create an association with cheap and outdated printing technologies. The dots symbolise the unknown identity of these unfortunate victims and the way law enforcement tries to give them an identity again.

I want to make another book, similar to this one, but centred on the criminal profiles of offenders. The criminal profile, or offender profile, is a list of characteristics that is created by investigators to help law enforcement identify a unidentified culprit. I'm not sure yet on what to do next, exactly. I might make a book in which the reader can shuffle through the profiles, but I need some more time to think about it.



- An emotional age equivalent to a 26- to 30-year-old at the time the murders began in 1979
- Engaged in paraphilic behaviour and brutal sex in his personal life
- Engaged in sex with prostitutes
- Had some knowledge of police investigative methods and evidence-gathering techniques
- Sexually functional, capable of ejaculation with consenting and non-consenting partners
- Dressed well and would not stand out in upscale neighbourhoods
- Lived or worked near Ventura, California, in 1980
- Good physical condition
- Skilled, experienced cat burglar, and may have begun as such
- Had a criminal record as a teenager which was expunged
- Had some means of income, but did not work in the early-morning hours
- Hated women for actual (or perceived) wrongs
- If married, probably had a submissive spouse who tolerated his sexually-deviant behaviour
- Intelligent and articulate
- Probably began as a voyeur in his late teens or early twenties
- Neat and well-organized in his personal life, and drove a well-maintained car
- Peeped in the windows of many people who were not attacked
- Possibly unmarried, and did not enter into long-term relationships
- Self-assured and confident
- Would continue committing violent crimes until incapacitated by prison, death, or other intervention
- Would have been described by those who knew him as arrogant, domineering, manipulative, and a chronic liar

*A reconstruction photo subjected to a riso print*

*A criminal profile*

I'm also very interested in 'forensic architecture': mapping and investigating a certain event through physically and digitally revisiting the scene where the event took place. I went to Birmingham to visit and photograph the eerie place where a mysterious murder took place during the Second World War. A skeleton was found by some boys inside a tree trunk in a forest near Hagley. The case remains unsolved to this day, despite the fact that a year after the skeleton was found, graffiti messages commenting on the case were found all over Birmingham. I want to make one or maybe even several projects about this compelling murder case. Right now, I'm thinking about making a photobook accompanied by fiction stories. Maybe next year I want to graduate with a short film involving the Bella In The Whych Elm case.

I also bought the original digitized police files from the so-called Bella case so that they can assist me further in my research.

### **What do you want to make next?**

The next thing I want to make in an art book involving the 'Criminal Profile'. I collected 25 criminal profiles and I want to bundle them in a engaging book. I'm not sure how yet. I might combine the two books or present them together as a fun, concluding part of my research.

### **What, how and why?**

#### *What*

First I want to make an art book centred on the Criminal Profile

#### *How*

I'm not entirely sure how I want to make this book

#### *Why*

I want to make this book to conclude my research on the nature of crime imagery. I regard it as a sort of guidebook and practice before I start to work on film I'm planning to make.